**AUF releases 1.2 million euros to support 56 research projects in 37 countries with 6 projects in the Middle East including 4 in Lebanon!**

As part of its COVID-19 plan launched in April 2020, the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie supported 92 projects from 87 member institutions through a first international call for projects with a fund of 1 million euros. This first call was aimed exclusively at young researchers from its 1007 member institutions. Faithful to its values of solidarity and attached to the promotion of research-action, the AUF launched, in July 2021, a second international call "AUF-COVID-19.2" by widening the typology of the eligible projects**.**

This second call, with an exceptional fund of 1.2 million euros, received 438 applications from 238 AUF member universities and institutions in 60 countries.

56 projects led by 52 higher education institutions from 37 countrieswill be funded for 12 months, and implementation will begin, for some, as early as December 2021.

In the Middle East region, 6 projects were selected: Iran (University of Tehran), Lebanon (Lebanese University, ESA Business School, American University of Beirut and Saint Joseph University of Beirut) and Palestine (An -Najah University).

These projects - 35 research projects (62.5%) and 21 support or accompaniment projects (37.5%) - will focus on actions in favor of public health, pedagogical innovation and strengthening university governance in times of crisis. They are in line with the axes of the 2021-2025 strategy of the AUF presented in Bucharest last September at its 18thèmeGeneral Assembly.

* 48% of the selected projects are led by women.
* 70% of the projects supported are from consortia bringing together several universities, research laboratories and/or companies and international organizations. It should be noted that 36% of partnerships involve more than one region in the world.

All eligible applications were evaluated by committees of experts attached to the 10 AUF regional offices on five continents.

The AUF thus intends to reaffirm the central place of universities in the global development of societies and to pursue its advocacy actions in favor of a greater recognition of the role of Francophone education and higher education as a response to global challenges.

**About the AUF**

Founded in 1961, the AUF - Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, the first university network in the world, with more than 1000 member institutions in nearly 120 countries, is the direct and recognized operator of the Francophonie for higher education and research. The AUF, with a presence on five continents, thanks to its network of establishments, as close as possible to the educational and university ecosystem, makes it one of the most impactful operators in the field. The AUF implements the commitments made in its field by the Conference of Heads of State and Government of Countries Using French as a Common Language. The AUF's mission is to support higher education and research institutions and to promote a scientific Francophonie committed to the economic, social and cultural development of societies. www.auf.org